



**OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
STATEWIDE TRAINING AND EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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Attachment 5

Date: January 4, 2013

To: Ronny J. Coleman, Chairman
c/o State Fire Training
1131 S. Street
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From: Kevin Conant, Fire Service Training Specialist III

Subject/Agenda Action Item: Continuing Education for Professional Certification

Recommended Actions:

- Information for Discussion.
- Request that STEAC, by motion appoint a subcommittee to work cooperatively with staff to develop the framework for the State Fire Training Continuing Education (CE) Program.

Background Information:

The timing of this discussion is predicated, in part, upon the upcoming online firefighter training management modernization project that will require a records management system request for proposals (RFP) to include a CE component.

State Fire Training desires that STEAC work cooperatively with staff to provide input in creating the scope, vision and framework for a requirement of CE for those on whom State Fire Training confers "certification" and our Registered Instructors. This is in alignment with Blueprint 2020 and within the construct of professional development with many of our allied industries. Many states already include a CE requirement for maintenance and currency of certification.

Blueprint 2020 identifies that *"there is currently no continuing education (CE) requirement for fire fighters, fire officers, chief officers or instructors to maintain their skill and knowledge through a comprehensive continuing education program."* It is a widely accepted professional consideration that relevant and valid CE focuses on the advancement, extensions and improvement for the knowledge and professional skills of the holder of certification in order that they maintain competency. In addition, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1021 recognizes the importance of training goals for all members to maintain required proficiencies.

NFPA 1021, the standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications states, "the fire officer at all levels of progression shall remain current with the general requirements for fire officers, human resource management, community and government relations, administration, inspections and investigations, emergency service delivery, and health and safety. 1.3.4."

NFPA 1021 also states, "Establish and evaluate a list of education and in-service training goals, given a summary of the job requirements for all positions within the department, so that all members can achieve and maintain required proficiencies. 7.2.3."

The immediate action step for the Quality Improvement goal of Blueprint 2020 is *“to develop a process for ensuring the currency and continuing education requirements for instructors and each respective certification level.”*

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

Fortunately, the concept of CE is not new for the fire service. For example, the Instructor of Record with the California Fire Fighter Joint Apprenticeship Committee, EMT and paramedic licensure with the state EMS Authority, the California Incident Command Certification System and the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) all have their respective CE and/or currency requirements.

Additionally, there are several training mandates that require refresher training for California fire service personnel. Yet, with any new initiative or process, a full vetting of the issues and concerns is necessary with the constituencies represented by the STEAC. In addition to creating a minimum standard of required hours of CE, the business processes and training delivery methods need to be fully examined prior to drafting a proposal.

It is entirely within the purview of a certifying body to determine the number and type of CE hours necessary to maintain certification and currency. In Blueprint 2020, the Business Processes and Training Delivery goal identifies that the method to track and record the individuals CE hours be a major component of consideration.

Professional CE is a specific learning activity generally characterized by the issuance of a certificate or continuing education units (CEU) for the purpose of documenting attendance at a designated seminar, successful completion of a course of instruction, or the demonstration of proficiency of said skills.

Many licensing or certifying bodies in a number of fields impose CE requirements on members who hold licenses or certificates to practice within a particular profession. As a certifying body, State Fire Training has the authority and responsibility to impose CE requirements on those it certifies. These requirements are intended to encourage professionals to expand their knowledge base and stay up-to-date on new developments, and maintain currency.

Although individual professions have different standards, the most widely accepted standard, developed by the International Association for Continuing Education & Training, is that ten contact hours equals one CEU. Not all professionals use the CEU convention. For example, the American Psychological Association accredits sponsors of CE such as PsychContinuingEd.com and uses simply a CE approach. In contrast to the CEU, the CE credit is typically one CE credit for each hour of contact. This is just one of many areas we will need to explore and make a decision on as we frame a CE program for State Fire Training programs.

The CE requirement could be satisfied through a number of deliveries including, CFFJAC course work, FSTEP courses, CFSTES courses, certain fire department in-service training, college coursework, extension courses, conferences and seminar attendance. The method of delivery for CE can include traditional types of classroom lectures and laboratories. However, many CE programs make heavy use of distance learning, which not only includes independent study, but can also incorporate recorded (DVD/CD-ROM) material, broadcast programming or Online Education, which has more recently dominated the distance learning community.

Some institutions have begun to offer hybrid courses where adult learners combine in-classroom learning, with online instruction. Online courses have brought the possibility of obtaining CE to many of those to whom it was previously out of reach.

In addition to independent study, the use of conference-type group study, which can include study networks (in many instances, meet together online) as well as different types of seminars/workshops, are used to facilitate learning. A combination of traditional, distance, and conference-type study may be used for a particular CE course or program.

Regardless of the delivery method, SFT must insure that course content and delivery is of the highest caliber. Surely we must understand that CE courses will be viewed as an extension of our curriculum and programs. CE courses can also become a valuable forum for the delivery of important information that will not be included in certification courses as we strive to align ourselves with national standards for professional qualification. Furthermore, our program must apply to registered instructors as well as those holding position certifications.

In order for training to be effective, it must incorporate the appropriate techniques to reach and enable the learner. Research has identified the importance of both cognitive and psychomotor development through training and continuing education. It is commonly understood in adult education that learning is most productive when it is both relevant and valid, and includes some form of hands-on activity. Firefighters enjoy bringing real life experiences to the table during training and this trait enhances the educational experience. This creates an emotional investment toward the subject matter, creating buy-in of the student. Therefore, manipulative, or hands-on training is necessary for acquiring and maintaining new skills, and the demonstration of competency through scenario-based performance evaluation should be included in this proposal.

Firefighters need to maintain a basic level of knowledge, skill and ability to provide the customer with the highest level of service. This is best accomplished through a robust training and CE program. Training is the necessary constant in this profession. CE is needed to maintain proficiency and to introduce new ways of thinking and performing. We must continually evaluate and improve based upon changes in the business, technology, methodology and customer needs.

A CE proposal should, at a minimum include:

- The number of hours required within a specified period
- An approved list of providers, courses & subjects
- Documentation required
- Required fees independent of administrative activity

Fortunately, organizations exist that promote and enhance quality in CE and training through research, education and the development and continuous improvement of criteria, principles and standards. We should borrow from the best practices of other professions/industries and leverage technology to the greatest degree possible when developing our CE requirement.

With direct involvement from STEAC, SFT desires to move forward with a CE component as part of our certification system by creating a proposal for the CE requirements in order to be in alignment with both Blueprint 2020, NFPA and nationally recognized best practices.